

## Deuteronomy 17 - Thursday, September 22nd, 2011

(1) "You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God a bull or sheep which has any blemish *or* defect, for that *is* an abomination to the LORD your God.

- In this first verse, God simply says what He means, and means what He says as it relates to giving God the "left-over's" with blemish or defect.
- Moses is providing instruction for them, and sort of imparting final words to them, knowing that he won't enter the Promised-Land with them.
- This is yet another one of those verses in which God lets us know how well He knows us, and how prone we are to try and get away with this.

- Maybe a better way to say it is that we should only, always, give the first and the best to God, because if we don't, then it's not really a sacrifice.
- Actually, this is the litmus test by which one can gauge whether or not what they give to God is a sacrifice or not, namely, is it a true sacrifice.
- Lest we think this borders on the lines of legalism, let me hasten to say that our giving to God, and sacrifice for God, is out of a response to God.

**Romans 12:1-2 NIV** Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. (2) Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- Paul says our sacrifice is pleasing to the Lord, and the will of the Lord, when we offer ourselves in view of the mercy we received from the Lord.
- In other words, like for the Israelites then, so too is this true for us now, we sacrifice our best to the Lord in response to what He's done for us.
- We see this ever so beautifully exemplified in King David's life when, in response to everything God had done, he willingly sacrifices to the Lord.

**2 Samuel 24:22-25 NIV** Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take whatever pleases him and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. (23) O king, Araunah gives all this to the king." Araunah also said to him, "May the LORD your God accept you." (24) But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them. (25) David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the LORD answered prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.

(2) "If there is found among you, within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing His covenant, (3) who has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded, (4) and it is told you, and you hear *of it*, then you shall inquire diligently. And if *it is* indeed true *and* certain that such an abomination has been committed in Israel, (5) then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing, and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones. (6) Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

- We looked at the nuts and bolts, if you will, of how the Israelites were to mete out this justice when we were in chapter thirteen of Deuteronomy.
- Here, instead of stoning the false prophet, this deals with one found guilty of false worship. In both cases, there had to be this diligent inquiry.
- They could not carry out this "death penalty," absent the presence of two or three witnesses who testify that it was "indeed true and certain."

**1 Timothy 5:19-21 NIV** (19) Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. (20) Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning. (21) I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.

- That's why Moses again warns against a rush to judgment without due process, diligently seeking out the truth as to the abomination committed.
- Paul echoed this in what we just read in 1 Timothy 5:19-21, when he says that an accusation against an elder must have two or three witnesses.
- Sadly, human nature is such that a man is guilty until proven innocent instead of innocent until proven guilty. Often it's on the testimony of one.

(7) The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you.

- Here, the witnesses were to cast the first stone, then afterward all were to participate in the stoning. This was done in this way for good reasons.
- First, it was a deterrent for the accused and the accuser, by virtue of how the accuser would be infinitely less likely to bring a false accusation.
- Secondly, if one was found guilty after this diligent inquiry corroborated by two or three credible witnesses, it would be a deterrent to everyone.

- The entire congregation participated in, and were witnesses of the execution of the one found guilty, so as to put away evil from among them.
- I suppose you could say this would've been an effective way to send the very clear message that this could be you, so don't even think about it!
- All were affected, so all were involved in both determining guilt and carrying out justice, and we see this ever so sadly demonstrated with Achan.

**Joshua 7:20-26 NIV** Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: (21) When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath." (22) So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. (23) They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the LORD. (24) Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. (25) Joshua said, "Why have you brought this trouble on us? The LORD will bring trouble on you today." Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them. (26) Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since.

(8) "If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between degrees of guilt for bloodshed, between one judgment or another, or between one punishment or another, matters of controversy within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses. (9) And you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge *there* in those days, and inquire *of them*; they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment.

- Moses goes from the who, the how, and the why, to the where, and the what of judging difficult and controversial cases that arise in their midst.
- In the event this were to happen, they were to take their case to the temple, where it was to then be decided, and the sentence pronounced.
- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that it means we're not to file law suits against brothers in secular courts.

1 Corinthians 6:1-4 NIV (1) If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? (2) Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? (3) Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! (4) Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!

(10) You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce upon you in that place which the LORD chooses. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they order you. (11) According to the sentence of the law in which they instruct you, according to the judgment which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside *to* the right hand or *to* the left from the sentence which they pronounce upon you. (12) Now the man who acts presumptuously and will not heed the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall put away the evil from Israel. (13) And all the people shall hear and fear, and no longer act presumptuously.

- Not only were they to take these cases to the temple, they were to abide by the judgment and sentence handed down by the priest or judge.
- If for whatever reason the individual did not agree with it, and do according to it, he was to be put to death, so all the people will hear and fear.
- At first glance, this may have the appearance of being excessively harsh however, upon further examination it was needed for law and order.

(14) "When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that *are* around me,' (15) you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; *one* from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who *is* not your brother.

- Here again, we have yet another one of those passages that is most telling in how the Lord knows us, and knows what we'll do before we do.
- Case in point, is when, yet future, in about four hundred years from the time that Moses preaches this sermon to the Israelites, they will do this.
- They will say give us a king over us to lead us like all the nations that are around us. In the end, God grants them this, but it's too their own peril.

1 Samuel 8:6-10, 19-22 NIV (6) But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. (7) And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. (8) As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. (9) Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do." (10) Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. ... (19) But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. (20) Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles." (21) When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. (22) The LORD answered, "Listen to them and give them a king." Then Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Everyone go back to his town."

- This particular account in Israel's history has been the subject of some debate amongst Bible commentators, as to why God gives them a king.
- Some suggest that this was not God's will for them originally, or at least initially, as He would give them a king in His time, according to His will.
- Others suggest it wasn't God's will for them to have a king, but knew they would demand it, which is why He gave them King David in His mercy.

- The application from this alone is profound, and in and of itself is worth the price of admission, so to speak, because it speaks to the will of God.
- I believe we can find ourselves, like the Israelites, in God's permissive will, or God's perfect will, and either way, God will work it for our good.
- However, that's not to say that when we get out, from under the spout, where God's perfect will comes out, we won't suffer the consequences.

(16) But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.' (17) Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

- Here, God is saying that there are three things these kings are not to do; 1. multiply horses, 2. multiply wives, and 3. multiply silver and gold.
- Why? Because these big three if you will, lead to the pride before the fall. One so aptly said it best; "never touch the gold, the gals, or the glory."
- Can you say King Solomon? Do you think that God had him in mind when He has Moses institute this prohibition? Solomon did exactly this.

1 Kings 10:23 NIV King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth.

1 Kings 4:26 NIV Solomon had four thousand stalls for chariot horses, and twelve thousand horses.

1 Kings 10:28 NIV Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue—the royal merchants purchased them from Kue.

1 Kings 11:3 NIV He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray.

(18) "Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from *the one* before the priests, the Levites. (19) And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, (20) that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment *to* the right hand or *to* the left, and that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

- Moses goes from what their king should not do, to what their king should do. He's to write for himself a copy of God's Word and keep it with him.
- He's to always have it, read it, and heed it all the days of his life so that his heart does not become proud and lifted up and turn away from God.
- To me, this is the first mention of technology in the scriptures, in how it speaks to downloading of a copy of the Bible onto your iPhone and iPad.

- I want to point out one more thing before we bring this chapter in for a landing. Notice it says that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren.
- In other words, hearing and heeding God's Word on a daily basis protects us from the tendency to look down on others, and be critical of others.
- I think of two sisters, Mary and Martha, one was too busy serving the Lord, literally, while the other chose to sit at the feet of the Lord, literally.

**Luke 10:38-42 NIV** As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. (39) She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. (40) But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" (41) "**Martha, Martha,**" the Lord answered, "**you are worried and upset about many things, (42) but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.**"